

Polo Ralph Lauren adds 150 jobs

And Bank of America has 100 positions to fill

Below are excerpts from two news articles about the November 20, 2003, Annual Meeting of the High Point Economic Development Corporation.

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By Matt Harrington
The Business Journal
November 20, 2003

HIGH POINT, NC -- Polo Ralph Lauren has added 150 new jobs in the last six months at its High Point distribution center as part of a project to renovate 450,000 square feet of space in the Piedmont Centre facility.

Mary Lawton, a vice president at Polo Ralph Lauren, said the renovation was to make room for the company's "Lauren" brand of women's clothing, which would be distributed through the facility. The space being renovated is part of the 1.3 million square feet of distribution and office space the company occupies in High Point.

The facility serves as the only distribution center for Polo Ralph Lauren in the United States.

Lawton made her comments at the annual meeting of the High Point Economic Development Corp. Titled "Growing and Thriving in High Point," the program featured speakers John O'Leary of Thomas Built Buses and Gary Gore of Bank of America, both of which have undergone expansions in the city in the last year.

O'Leary noted that Thomas Built had introduced its latest school bus design at a conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, earlier this month, which met with rave reviews. The company, which just finished its \$40 million new plant in High Point, also recently won the contract for 780 buses for the state of North Carolina's schools.

"People here stepped up in a huge way" to make the company's expansion happen in High Point over South Carolina locations, he said. "Without all you've done (the site) would be an empty clay field."

Gore, with Bank of America, also thanked the city for its help in an expansion that will add 380 employees to the company's operations in Piedmont Centre. About 280 of those jobs have already been filled, with the remainder expected to be added in the first quarter of 2004.

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By Michele Abbott
High Point Enterprise
November 21, 2003

HIGH POINT, NC -- The Polo Ralph Lauren distribution center in High Point has quietly added 150 employees to its newly expanded facility over the past six months, taking the company census to more than 1,000.

The news was among a list of economic projects highlighting the annual meeting of the High Point Economic Development Corp. on Thursday, where business leaders and municipal officials touted municipal cooperation in key projects:

- Support for financial incentives for business development that inspired Thomas Built Buses to invest \$40 million in a state-of-the-art manufacturing plant in High Point and \$40 million more for research and development of a new vehicle.
- In 1993, Nations Bank received a \$352,000 cash grant from the city. Results from the incentive included a \$33 million capital investment from the company and a 400,000-square-foot office building that later became a base for nearly 2,000 Bank of America consumer service jobs. Officials there announced a \$2.5 million expansion plan in July and have since hired 280 new employees. Another 100 will be brought on board in the first quarter of next year.

More than 80 local business representatives and government leaders attended Thursday's meeting.

"In the last 14 months, I have had more people come up to me and say, 'Thank you for staying in High Point.' I feel a little sheepish - we should be thanking you," said John O'Leary, president of Thomas Built Buses.

"We had talked about moving to South Carolina, but people here stepped up. It was you all that got it done. If you drive by the new facility, or you see a new bus driving down the road, I hope you feel a little bit of ownership."

Gary Gore, market president for Bank of America's High Point location, said the company is willing to invest locally because of common values such as "world class educational partnerships" (and) a healthy spirit of diversity.

HPEDC President Loren Hill opened the meeting by recognizing guests representing companies that have grown or settled in High Point over the last year -- which, cumulatively, have announced or implemented plans to build, lease or otherwise put to use more than 18.24 million square feet of commercial space.

The growth also means the addition of more than 2,000 present and future jobs.

Thursday's luncheon meeting agenda also served as a venue for election of new officers. Coy Williard was asked to continue as board chairman through June 2005. Also elected were Hoyt Almond, first vice chairman; Owen Bertschi, second vice chairman; and Leah Price, secretary treasurer.

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